

Stepping up Vega launcher production

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ESA's Vega VV02 rocket is ready for liftoff, 4 May, 2013 (GMT). Vega VV02 is the first of the five flights scheduled in ESA's Vega Research and Technology Accompaniment – VERTA – programme, which aims to demonstrate the flexibility of the launch system. At a minimum rate of two launches per year, the programme will allow the smooth introduction of Vega for commercial exploitation. VV02 will loft Proba-V, the first of four ESA missions, into space. Proba-V carries a reduced version of the Vegetation instrument currently flying on the Spot satellites to provide a daily overview of global vegetation growth.

This first VERTA flight will also demonstrate Vega's capability to launch multiple payloads into two different orbits. Proba-V, the prime payload, will be released first. The remaining two payloads: Vietnam Natural Resources, Environment and Disaster Monitoring Satellite (VNREDSat-1) built by Astrium for the Vietnamese government and the Estonian cubesat (ESTCube-1) will be released later, into a different orbit. Credit: ESA–S. Corvaja, 2013

Such is the success of Europe's Vega small launcher that an order was signed today in Rome for the production of ten more vehicles. These will be launched over three years from the end of 2015.

The contract was signed by Stéphane Israel, Chairman and CEO of Arianespace, and Pierluigi Pirrelli, CEO of European Launch Vehicle (ELV).

The signing ceremony took place during the 31st Franco-Italian summit, under the auspices of Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta and the President of France, François Hollande with France's Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and in the presence of the respective Research Ministers, Geneviève Fioraso for France and Mario Chiara Carrozza for Italy.

This order supplements the five rockets already ordered in 2010 for the initial exploitation phase of the launch system within ESA's Vega Research and Technology Accompaniment (VERTA) programme to demonstrate the system's flexibility.

At the same time, ESA, Arianespace and ELV concluded a Memorandum of Understanding specifying the general framework of this activity and the sharing of risks and responsibilities in the exploitation phase of the Vega launch system until 2018 and the

transition from VERTA. This was signed by Stéphane Israel, Pierluigi Pirrelli and Antonio Fabrizi, ESA Director of Launchers.

Vega is operated in conjunction with the heavy-lift Ariane 5 and medium-lift Soyuz launchers at Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. Vega is the ideal launcher for small scientific and Earth observation missions in low or Sun-synchronous orbits.

Altogether, seven ESA Member States – Italy, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden – are contributing to the programme.

The industrial prime contractor is ELV SpA, 70% of which is owned by Avio SpA and 30% by Italy's ASI space agency.

ELV is responsible for Vega's development, production, delivery and launch integration. As the future Vega service provider, Arianespace is responsible for [launch](#) operations.

The acts signed today in Rome are key in offering competitive Vega flight opportunities to ESA missions and other users until the end of 2018.

Provided by European Space Agency

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